La Paz, 11-13 September 2019  
Venue: Vice Presidency of the Pluri-national State of Bolivia  
Calle Ayacucho and Mercado Nº 308, City of La Paz  

The Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean of the MOWLAC-UNESCO “Memory of the World” Program hosted this Regional Conference on the “Memory of the World” Program in the city of La Paz, headquarters of the Government of the Pluri-national State of Bolivia, on 11-13 September 2019, with support by UNESCO, the Pluri-national State of Bolivia and the Government of Japan.

The active members of MOWLAC attended the 20th Meeting and the new members just joining attended the meeting with MOWLAC’s Secretary and its advisors.

Participants in the Regional Conference on the Memory of the World Program included:
• Representatives of the National Memory of the World Program Committees, in those countries where they have been formed.
• Representatives UNESCO’s liaison offices in those countries where no National Committees that have been constituted.
• Representatives of UNESCO’s regional offices, as fraternal delegates and observers.
• Memory of the World Committees from other regions, as fraternal delegates and observers.

Topics:
The Regional Conference’s sessions on 11-12 September covered the following topics:
• Report on the current status of the Memory of the World Program, by Guilherme Canela, Executive Secretary of MOWLAC.
• Challenges facing the Memory of the World Program, regarding documentary preservation in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in countries participating in the Conference.
• Dialogue among National Committees and representatives of UNESCO offices to share experiences and report on activities conducted in relation with the “Memory of the World” Program. It is recommended for National Committees and Representatives of UNESCO offices to give the MOWLAC Secretariat a printed report with a digital support copy.
• Developing national action plans to reduce risks from disasters and to preserve documentary heritage.
• Reflections and strategies about preserving digital memory.
• National plans about implementing the *Recommendation regarding preservation of documentary heritage, including digital heritage and access to it* (UNESCO, 2015).
• Regional strategies for the future of the "Memory of the World" Program, proposed by Conference participants.

**Wednesday 11/09.**

10:00 a.m. **Inaugural ceremony**, with assistance from UNESCO authorities and Bolivian Government authorities. Greetings from the fraternal delegates and observers.

- Words of Guilherme Canela, Communication and Information Councilor for Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Chile.

- Words of Luis Oporto-Ordóñez, Chairman of the Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Memory of the World Program.

- Words of the Vice Minister for Alternative and Special Education, Noel Aguirre.

- Words of the Minister of Cultures and Tourism, Vilma Alanoca-Mamani.

2:00 p.m. Tour through the exposition of documents on the upper floor.

3:00 p.m. **Dialogue** among the members of the MOWLAC and MOWCAP Regional Committees; National Committees; Representatives of UNESCO offices in Latin America and the Caribbean and guest countries, to analyze national plans to implement the *Recommendation regarding preservation of documentary heritage, including digital heritage, and access to it* (UNESCO, 2015). Moderator: Guilherme Canela, Communication and Information Councilor for Mercosur (UNESCO, Montevideo) and Secretary of MOWLAC.

**Thursday 12/09.**

9:00 a.m. **Discussion workshop on “Preserving Digital Memory”**.
Reflections on long-term strategies and short-term measures to guarantee longer life expectancies for digitized objects and those born digital.
Organized by Fernando Osorio (Mexico, member of the "Memory of the World" Program Technology Sub-Committee (SCoT)).
Moderated by Pedro Navas (Ecuador), member of MOWLAC.

Panelists were Érika Lucía Rangel (Assistant Director of Archival Information Technologies and Electronic Documents of the General Archive of the Nation in Colombia); Roberto Aguirre (Director of Special Projects and Digital Collections
of the National Library of Chile), and Fernando Osorio (Mexico, member of the "Memory of the World" Program Technology Sub-Committee (SCoT)).

The discussion workshop stressed the challenge posed to conserve collections, which calls for developing specialty profiles for human capital; safeguarding audiovisual collections on various support media, especially non-professional ones, and progress in policies addressing these issues. Production, conservation and safeguarding of official procedures in digital formats was also emphasized.

The particular problems of digital heritage are the large volume of information, the haste in deciding whether to conserve it, and the difficulty in guaranteeing ownership, plus new forms of publication that are generated (generated by creators themselves), so direct agreements with content producers are recommended. In the case of social network archives, it was warned that they become meaningless without their context and must be based on events.

It was clarified that there is no archive without a reproduction (playback, projection) technique that can protect against the oblivion threatened by rapid obsolescence. Human capital is both the costliest and the most valuable capital, and there is little curricular offering to train people.

Further, most processes that are now digital (procedures, services, medical records) make no provision for managing or conserving this memory information. Naturally, hardware, software and formats face obsolescence, but conservation and access require not only financial resources to purchase or renew equipment, but also policies and guidelines. The NASA Open Archival Information System model, developed to curb the loss of information about historic space missions, was proposed, since it is a conceptual/functional model that is applicable not only for digital archives. It has units for intake, information management, storage, access, planning for preservation and administration. It also divides information packages for transferring, archiving and querying.

2:00 p.m. Panel: “Developing national action plans, under the 2015 Recommendation, to reduce disaster risks and preserve documentary heritage”.

The panel included Mitsuru Haga (Vice Chairman of the Japan National Committee for the “Memory of the World” Program and professor at the University of Tohoku); Richenell Ansano (Curazao, 2nd Vice Chair of MOWLAC); Jamion Knight (UNESCO office in San José, Costa Rica); Lizbeth Barrientos (Chair of the National “Memory of the World” Committee in Guatemala) and Sofía Borrego (Head of the Preventive Conservation Laboratory of the National Archives of the Republic of Cuba).

Moderated by Yolia Tortolero (Mexico, 1st Vice Chair of MOWLAC).
The risks facing documentary heritage in the Caribbean are of three types (hurricanes, earthquakes and molds), whereas Central America's vulnerability is a result of its geography (a volcanic, seismic region also affected by climate change) and its geopolitics (heavy migratory flows and drug traffic). Unfortunately, it is estimated that under 70% of archives and libraries have preventive plans against risks and disasters and few of these institutions have strong relationships with their communities.

For disasters there must be preparation to save lives, so what will be done with heritage must be planned beforehand, such as training for police and firefighters. Further, information about the heritage value kept in collections should not be georeferenced for the general public, because this might encourage pillaging.

Instruments must be adapted to each reality and that is the intersectoral work that governments must do with UNESCO offices to attempt to salvage as much heritage as possible from two equally dangerous factors: the combination of natural disasters and disasters caused by human actions. Violence also creates disasters for reasons of political, religious, ethnic and ideological conflicts.

Accordingly, it is recommended to be practical and work together with World Heritage and intangible heritage conventions, with museums, cultural industries and cultural administration, building links with universities, generating networks of volunteers; guaranteeing regional exchange; and all with a proactive attitude. Committees' work is essential, to identify heritage and risks, update inventories, and reflect the value of documents; and develop strategies rather than just waiting for States’ reactions. Cuba told of their experience in setting up a network for collaboration among specialists, and in the wake of the tsunami in Fukushima, Japan, the category has been proposed of disaster monuments, to raise consciousness about the mistakes make – and not repeat them. With capacity to prevent and prepare, the solution can be found quickly.

**Working groups.** The Working Groups read their conclusions, as a basis for preparing the Letter from the City of La Paz.

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**Friday 13/09.**

10.30 a.m. Special program for Regional Conference participants: The guided visits began:

- Funicular skyway ride over La Paz. Visit to the Center of the Cultural Revolution, sponsored by the Manager of the *Mi Teleférico* company, César Dockwailer.
- Ancestral ceremony, “La Waj’t’a”, with folk music and “Apthapi” (a community meal, Andean buffet style) offered by the Yatiris (Aymara elders) in the city of El Alto.

- Historical Archive of Mining in Bolivia, where the signing of the Letter from the City of La Paz began. It was signed by all authorities present, with the commitment to defend and protect documentary heritage, including digital heritage.

14.00 a.m. - Guided visits to:

- The Flavio Machicado-Viscarra Foundation

- Meeting with the Vice President of the Pluri-national State of Bolivia, Álvaro García-Linera, discussing with Conference participants and MOWLAC members about the meeting’s work and the documents from Bolivia that have been incorporated into the Memory of the World. The Vice President and the Minister of Cultures and Tourism signed the Letter from the City of La Paz to protect historical documentary heritage, including digital heritage.

- Tour and activities in the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore.

9:00 p.m.

- Banquet of honor presided over by the Minister of Cultures and Tourism, Vilma Alanoca-Mamani, attended by forty Conference participants.